

**AN INTRA-GENDER CRITIQUE TOWARDS SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION IN
SADE ADENIRAN'S *IMAGINE THIS***

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Abstract

Imagine This is an epistolary biography of a Nigerian girl whom circumstances of life presents a record of more life-threatening conflicts with the female folk around her than with the male folk. Since Intra-gender conflicts (those existing within both gender groups) and several patterns of interaction among and within genders can be found in the text as, the Intra-Gender Conflict Theory is suitably applied in the objective evaluation of the female-authored literary text, which establishes the problems Lola (the protagonist) encounters with men as seemingly easily surmountable as she manoeuvres her way around them unlike those she runs into with women. This paper intends to ascertain that feminine challenges

which are mostly familial, punctured by socio-cultural beliefs and with some gender connotations, can be easily conquered. This can happen if the psychological effects of those triune aspects of life on children, particularly the girl child, are considered and that the society can be made better if women can be more loving, supportive and united among fellow mature or up-coming women, in carrying out their pivotal familial and social roles towards the reconstruction and development of the rural and urban society(s).

Keywords: intra-gender, social reconstruction, *Imagine This*, Sade Adeniran

INTRODUCTION

A gender critique of a literary text refers to its theoretical analyses, paying close attention to the voices, roles, statuses and privileges given to each gender, in considering the characters, style, structure and thematic preoccupations as created by the writer. A critical gender-concerned evaluation recognises both genders as unique and measures the power-play of men over women or women over men, as arranged and allowed by the immediate community in question. It is an attempt to identify characters, particularly females, to evaluate the socio-cultural context and conventions they are placed in the text, to appraise the language used for them and their own use of words, and measure the stereotypical images and notes that are attributed to women especially. (Akorede, Yetunde 19-21)

Looking into history, men had more formal exposure to literary engagements than women and were essentially the prevailing voices recognized with literacy and consequently, literature, with the likes of Ezra Pound, John Keats, Walt Whitman, Alexander Pope, John Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Thomas Eliot, and many others ever before female writers began to gain some recognition. Initially, texts written by women were

relegated to the tutelage of children (Children Literature), since such works focused on family matters that they are primarily overtly familiar with, and not the general situations of life such as politics, business, law, war and so on, which are fondly explored in texts authored by men. (Synder par. 20-22) Afterwards, women were forced to rise in their own defence using the same tool that men had wielded against them, which had also led to the projection of feminism as an ideology in their texts and public speeches. Earlier women writers were Anne Bradstreet, Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mary Shelley, Edith Wharton, Gabriela Mistral (Lucila Godoy y Alcayaga), Agatha Christie, Octavia Butler, Jeanette Winterson, Alice Walker, Maya Angelou, J.K. Rowling (Trombetta par. 4-17) Hence, a gender critique looks into the social power or subjugation women enjoy or endure in reality as pictured through literature, either in oral or written texts.

Feminism, the earliest theory propounded for and employed in gender matters before other gender theories evolved, can be applied in the analysis of a text, to examine the ways men express their expectations from women generally, making these women see themselves as stereotypes, using their respective languages as a tool to cage women and naming them as the male writers deem fit. (Ugwanyi, Dele Maxwell 1-2)

When women could write, they came up with a means of changing their views, names and lifestyles which are being projected through literature. Several scholars such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf, Julia Kristeva, Helen Cixous, Okonjo Ogunyemi, Alice Walker, and many others viewed feminism as a theory that boldly and wholly supports or represents women in all spheres of life: revealing their circumstances, arguing out their unequal rights and achieving better roles, statuses and social classes for them, especially

through literature, as expressed by both sexes, since women writers were just earning some recognition. To them, literary texts show real life situations; therefore they should be vividly explained through a life-assessing ideology. (Sisterhood and After Research Team par. 1-4) The theory also aims at bringing their essays, texts and other literary works to the lime light, so as to unveil the mental strength of women and debunk the prior knowledge widely held about them: objects of pleasure, excessively emotional, weak, irrational, passive, etc. (Karik-Namiji, Olubukola 15-16)

The text in question (*Imagine This*) is an example of many brilliant works with well calculated and arranged order of events, unbiased childlike mentality and philosophies, and well built up chronology of knowledge from a personal experience that altogether create the psychology, behaviours and expectations of a girl-child in a world where both sexes exist but where one obviously enjoys a higher social class in comparison with the other, irrespective of the socio-cultural context.

THEORETICAL PRELIMINARIES

Feminism, as the foremost woman-promoting ideology, was developed primarily as a western idea, passed on to the other parts of the world. Some other continents, like Asia, Africa, and so on, view feminism as a colonial idea which is not entirely applicable to their situations because research has revealed that gender-concerned issues vary within separate communities. (Akorede 111) and (Ugwanyi 1-2) For example, marriage and child bearing are not as important in the West as they are in Africa. So, the laws and ethics to be embraced will be necessarily unequal. Therefore, several writers and scholars propounded different theories, such as *Womanism* by Alice Walker (the Afro-American); *Africana Womanism* from Clenora

Hudson-Weems; Ogundipe Lelsie brought STIWANISM (especially for Africa); Catherine Acholonu advocated *Motherism*; while Ifeoma Okonjo developed the theory *Personism*. They all saw the need for theories that are relevant to the problems of their immediate environments which are not totally same as the West, and cannot be addressed through Feminism. In the first place, colonialism caused a lot of problems, so the colonialists' theory could not solve the problems they caused. (Kolawole, Mary 10-16) In the words of Karik- Namiji Olubukola, the appearance of feminism in Africa is perceived "civil, mild and accommodating of both genders in its quest for equal rights, privileges, opportunities and obligations". (13) and (Ifechelobi J.N. 18)

However, the text being considered is African, it dwells on the challenges of the African females from the African perspectives and requires an African-proposed theory in doing a fitting gender critique, for which the intra gender theory, a relatively new literary theory, shall be applied. There had been so much fuss on the oppressive influence of the male folk over the female folk but research has confirmed that women also oppress fellow women; and when this happens, it is usually more brutal, just as presented in Imagine This! Hence, its application in this paper, in order to verify all doubts!

At the time when only men wrote, they either follow the stereotypes they have created for women or debate them, stereotypes which some writers have observed to be the sources of evil to the lives of men, as Eve was to Adam in the Bible. They were projected passive, unstable, irrational, exciting, sensuous, and unintelligent by many male writers. Women are serviceable when they are docile, obedient, chaste, innocent, selfless, dependent, etc., while they become non-serviceable by being promiscuous, bad, decisive, over-emotional,

troublesome, passive, temptresses, etc. (Akorede 112-115) and (Kolawole 79-81) None of them is pleasant but men usually prefer the boot-licking serviceable women (emphasis mine).

However, male writers such as Sembene Ousmane in his *Her Three Days*, Ngugi wa Thiongo's Mumbi (in few of his works), Driss Chraïbi (Kolawole 4-5), Festus Iyayi, Isidore Okpewho, Tayeb Salih, Ben Okri and many others, in their works, have re-presented women as strong, decisive, mentally balanced, barrier-breaking people, focused and intelligent as their realities can afford to. Women writers have risen to portray themselves as they wish to be seen. Since Literature had been used to make women see themselves as inferior, they write to correct such notions in the psyche of other women. Via female writers, we now have roles of female characters such as, idolized heroes (those who achieve great feats), subsumed people (those that are neither oppressed nor heroes), characters in search of identities (having no self-worth) and achievers after struggling (possibly people below the average). (Akorede 127-129) and (Utoh-Ezeajugh 1-2)

Several suggestions by African female writers in their attempt to establish a formidable brand of African feminism discovered and introduced the aspect called Intra Gender relations. (Karik-Namiji, Olubukola 13-14) According to Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh, (181-182) the united intra gender movements of women had achieved great and impossible feats through history. They said, "Women exercise the most effective sanction against misrule in some African traditional societies, when a king becomes intolerable to his subjects, a procession of grandmothers will march naked to his palace. No ruler survives this final and dramatic reputation by the mothers of his subject". With further examples such as, "The history of Aba women's Riot of 1929, the Egba Women's uprising of the 1930, the Ogharefe women's

uprising of 1984, the Ughelli women's anti-tax protest of 1985...", they were able to establish the influence women can have. More emphasis was placed on the abilities and qualities of women when they are united and decide to chart the course of their own destinies. According to them, "A woman has all it takes to run her world ... by running the man who runs the world for her". It therefore becomes increasingly possible to fight oppression when intra gender humiliation, pain and frustration had been fully dealt with. (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 16)

These two scholars also came to conclude that women oppression over other women now suggests, according to them, "a need for a critical redirection, for in accordance with Focu Feminism, it is only when women stop fighting one another, that they can only address properly some of the factors that reduced them to a second class status". (186)

Only a united confrontation by the female folk can get them their desired freedom, according to Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh. (40) The participation of women in security challenging/ demanding contexts such as a connection during wars had been outstanding. Writer says such suggests a connection between the presence of women at higher status and the sustainability of peace with/ without social/civil conflicts. (Theodora-Ismene, Gizelis 5)

Okpala, and Utoh-Ezeajugh also did acknowledge how influential women could be on men (as some manoeuvre men to do their wishes in exchange for bodily pleasures) from some novels by Ammar Darko. Having to stand together against the same for (male folk) will further establish the powers they can wield. (16)

THE INTRA GENDER CONFLICT THEORY

Intra gender conflicts have been researched and reported as, "more exploitative than male domination". It appeared to them, almost impossible for African men to oppress other

women without the support of some other women somewhere! (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 18-21) and (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh, 141)

Widowhood practices in Igboland (West Africa) for instance had been reported to have been enforced by the umuokpu/umuada who are fellow women within the same lineage, basically from the family of the deceased groom, who rigidly and brutally apply inhumane laws/regulations on the specific widow or any woman who breaches their rules. They can insist that the widow drinks the water with which the late husband was washed to prove her innocence! (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 141)

Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh (143) also noted however that the status economic/social status of the widows in question, her level of education/exposure, her immediate environment, the number of her children as well as the gender of the children also determine the strength/influence of the umunna and umuada on such a widow. It is possible that she refuses some of the culture encroachments, she could seek redress from some legal authorities in the urban areas and her adult sons could push for her rights against her fellow women.

The Intra-gender theory also investigates with the perception that women cause their own problems, directly or not. They co-exist but due to some factors, they clash, oppress and suppress their own kinds. The theory targets re-orientating the female folk: to quit pointing accusing fingers at men and to look inwards. According to various scholars, the co-wife relationship, for instance, make women rivals, envious, malicious and suspicious of themselves, leading to other vices, and usually fuelled by the special attention the husband gives to one of the wives. Such intra gender relationships also breeds competitions in which women strive to achieve at something, that is not divisible to any of them, or one within a

family, either between a man and his wife or many wives or between the children of many others. Additionally, such relationships are viewed politically as one that keeps women out of power when other women do not support them. (Akorede 168-176) and (Utoh-Ezeajugh 2-3)

Methodology:

This paper presents the application of the Intra gender theory on the primary text, Imagine This, using the following levels: Causes of intra gender conflicts, Types of Gender Characters, Types of Conflicts and the patterns of interaction, towards unravelling the thematic preoccupation. Three levels of conflicts have also been discovered, which are the “Intra personal, Inter-group and Intra-group conflicts”, and from the primary text, the conflicts can be Intra-Gender as well. When goals and desire clash, competition occurs, there is rivalry, favouritism and dissatisfaction, especially when the goals become indivisible. Opposition then arises in peoples’ interactions simply caused by misunderstanding. The theory also focuses on the following ideas being used as measures in the textual analysis:

- Man is central to most feminine conflicts by preferring a wife, thereby creating enemies;
- Making them to strive jealously in order to love and raise their own ‘bosses’ (sons), and
- Presiding over them as judges;
- Women live in peace when they do not share their desires, especially men, with others;
- Girls are directly or indirectly initiated into familial Intra-gender conflicts; and
- Lack of feminine support leaves women out of power in politics. (Akorede 60-63).

Many women have been referred to as Queen bees who wield so much power over other women and various female African writers have been accused of being silent concerning it, on issues such as widowhood, polygamy, female trafficking. (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 18-21)

Within the immediate families of the umuada for instance, they exert so much power and authority over fellow women especially those married into the family and sisters-in-law who are widows, with claims of being the culprits. They seem to forget that the women they relate with brutally are daughters elsewhere while they too would become in-laws elsewhere too. It appears a cycle at the death of any man that some older women must inflict pain, as experienced or more, on other women, with cultural claims (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 142)

Causes of Intra Gender Conflicts: Many fundamental bases for this had been discovered to be sociocultural and behavioural in nature, ranging from the challenges of childlessness, the attitudinal disposition of both genders to it, (in terms of their biting silence, even as writers, despite the influence of Western civilization) and many more. Many women had also been described as 'baby thieves' (Okpala, E.P., and T. Utoh-Ezeajugh.31) and (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 5), but with the appropriate and deliberate sense of awareness these can be surmounted to the true liberation of women.

- Illiteracy: Literate or educated women are usually urban-based and usually placed into a separate class division against the illiterates who are usually in the villages as noted by (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 46, 142-143)
- Culturally overrating marriage in Africa: Some older women address marriage as the whole essence of a woman's significance to younger women (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 10)
- Mothers-in-law inflict pain that could only be resolved/relieved by the sons who usually refuse to, or are too weak to, leaves the wife extremely subjected in both ways: male

preference and female hero worshipping! (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 6-7) and (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 43-44)

- The sense of ownership by in-laws in the home, influencing the man to be insensitive towards his wife, such that the wife is enslaved (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 11)
- Mothers enforce suitors on their daughters based on family greatness and wealth, with little or no regard for the consent or desires of the potential brides (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 16) and (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 79)
- Polygamy had remained a stringer tool of female subjugation because some women support, canvass and participate in it! (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh) &(Nguwasen, Martha Chia and Ifeoma Mabel Onyemelukwe 11, 66)
- The woman's inability to produce any or male children can cause painful conflicts such that according to her, ..."Women fight women even when the battle and victory are for the benefit of men"..... (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 138) Thereafter, some women have swung into other vices (such as adultery, ripping homes apart, etc) in their quest to have children at all cost and hence, keep their husbands, or to establish some future support systems in their older ages. (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 4-6)
- Female mutilation by older and culturally strict women execute it as stipulated by culture (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 12-14)

The desire of older and culturally dignified women (like the umunuma) to exert power on others (Adam, Ezinwanyi 80) and (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 44,48)

- Lack of economic power only allows the free flow of dehumanizing rules enforced on women (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh 48-49)

- Discrimination against female children (Utoh-Ezeajugh 8-9)
- Child/female trafficking is another means of economic exploitation against fellow women, due to poverty or a portrayed desire for greener pastures. Some ladies are used as channels or means of reaching other ladies with news of all expense-paid opportunities, for which the poor novices may be granted a caricature interview for credibility, only ladies are accepted and some further female connectors are brought into the picture, giving no room for any form of suspicion. (Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh (156-159) and (Nguwasen and Onyemelukwe 66)

In confirmation, the carefully crafted text, Imagine this, presents to us how many of these causes of intra-gender conflicts play out among women particularly. The literate or educated women are treated better than the illiterate, just as the rich women/wives are seen able to maneuver things to their favour. Mama can not exact her authority on Lola's mother (educated) as she does on Mama Dayo, and Cook Woman is also able to influence others around her due to her husband's wealth and influence. It is unforgivable to be an unmarried yet mature woman or to become pregnant outside wedlock or to be childless in marriage, or to be married from a different tribe/town, or to have only female children. Mama displays all these factors in relating with all her daughters-in-law especially. Auntie Bunmi has to single handedly take her own delivery and Mrs Batiste takes extreme cautions because she is a single mother.

Polygamy makes Mama an automatic enemy of her blind husband with his other wife and Cook woman ensures she has no one to contend with in her home. Auntie Bose's sense of ownership in Iya Soji's home, as her sister-in-law, makes her fight with Iya Soji. All the wives

married into the Ogunwole family physically abused Lola, both culturally in the village and socially in the city.

Characters in Intra Gender Conflicts found in Imagine This:

Iya Rotimi against little Lola (to be rescued by a handsome Prince, eg., Mr Ogunwole, Baba Dayo or Uncle N) pages 2-5;

Mr Ogunwole (father) against Adebola (pages 2-4)

Uncle Joseph against Adebola (page 43), till Adebola dies (pages 85- 86);

Yinka against Lola (page 6) while Rotimi, a boy seems nicer;

Iya Rotimi and Mama against Mama Tayo, a daughter in law;

Mama against Lola, her own granddaughter;

Dorcas against Lola;

The dormitory girls against Fatima (pages 70-71);

Lola desires a mother that she lacks because only women should understand feminine matters (pages 58,154,168);

Iya Soji against Lola;

Choice of who to love among grandchildren (eg, Yinka from an Idogun woman) page 63:

Jumoke against Remi (page 71);

Jumoke against Remi and against Lola;

Gbenga against Mr Ogunyemi, (the principal) over Dorcas (page 76);

Mama against Mama Abeni and Iya Alaba (pages 107-108);

Mama accuses Iya Dayo over Baba Dayo's accident;

Veronica against Lola over a book (page 116);

Remi and Dorcas over Gbenga (page 123);

Iya Foluso against Lola (page 125);

Society can blame Iya Foluso for Lola's failures or problems (page 141);

Uncle Niyi's mum (Mama Joseph) against Iya Soji (pages 150,157);

The two girls at the party against Lola over Segun could scratch out another lady's eyes because of Segun (pages 160-161);

Auntie Bose helps Mama against Iya Soji;

Mama Joseph against Nana because she is from Ghana (page 168);

Yolande, Maggi and Lola are fare-weathered friends;

Yolande against Mrs Baptiste and Lola (pages 179, 201- 202);

Iya Soji and Iya Foluso against Cook woman over Mr Ogunwole's sudden wealth (page 188);

Wives in the family who are not from Ibogun (Cook woman and Iya Foluso) are to blame for the ills in the family (page 189);

Cook woman (step mother) pushes Lola away from the mansion, while boy Ekundayo cries to have her in;

Segun against Mr Ogunwole over Lola, thinking Mr Ogunwole is in a sexual relationship with Lola;

Mr Ogunwole against the young male dentist over Lola;

Seeing Tunde and the wealthy personality of Mr Ogunwole around Lola, makes some younger girls at the coaching centre (eg, Funke) to flock around Lola who does not want them around her.

Maggi (studious) against Ngozi (promiscuous to survive) pages 207-208;

Quarrels over food at a party, between Iya Foluso and Cook woman (page 216);

Lola against Bridget because of Segun (pages 247-248,265);

Bola influences Segun badly which adversely affects his relationship with Lola. He also divulges Segun's secret party to Lola, whereas Charles keeps his secret.

Men give Lola gifts for Christmas but the women refuse to;

Only men (Uncle N, Soji, Tobi, Charles and Segun) make Lola feel loved. (pages 175-176);

Few Triumphs of Intra Gender unity:

Lola survives hunger because Remi and Dorcas allow her share their food with them;

Ngozi's help and bits of advice to Lola helps her to handle peer pressure (page 131);

Bidemi and Lola are friends indeed regardless of Bidemi's younger age;

Auntie Bose helps Lola against sexual abuse (178-179);

Alhaja shows love to Lola who refuses it initially but later accepts her love. She helps Lola gain some stability, an assertive voice and a good future plan, while she (Alhaja) gains an additional daughter in Lola.

Types of Characters

Female Characters: Characters are the individuals in a literary work. Four different types of female characters are portrayed in the text. They are the heroines, achievers, subsumed and characters in search of identities. (Akorede 126-128)

The Heroines are the strong, opinionated and selflessly sacrificial female characters who can defend themselves and possibly, others. Examples are Mrs Baptiste who cares for her

home, alongside Lola, even when she lives without a husband; and Alhaja who picks another person's daughter and willingly fends for her and supports her wellbeing afterwards. These are women who seem problem-free and can be emulated. Achievers are those who struggle and eventually achieve what they wanted. Auntie Bunmi suffers in the hands of men, puts to bed on her own and brings up her children alone until she gets her own home. Lola is also one who endures all forms of opposition till she owns a home and bank accounts in London. They both, for instance, pass through tough times and get out of them victoriously. Subsumed characters are those that seem unimportant, passive and hidden. They are many in the text, such as the individuals like the dead uncle's wife, female church members, female villagers, female boarders, market women, female students in Lola's classes, female rioters, the white lady, and so on. Characters in search of identities are those that cave families, companions or friends to be identified with for some self-worth. Lola is also an example with reference to her growth. She believes her family should give her a reason to live but gets disappointed, so she seeks it from friends. At a time, she loses hope on life before Uncle Jacob comes to her rescue. Ngozi also lives on different men for survival because she believes money is everything. Without men, she has no identity. Dorcas has none too and so she begs to become a second wife while still a student.

Male Characters: There are male characters who deal harshly with their own folk, such as, Uncle Joseph against Adebola, Father against Adebola, Father against Doctor, Uncle N against Father, Charlie Boy against Tobi, the Principal against Gbenga, and so on. This shows that women have to help themselves since men can be cruel to fellow men. Sometimes too, women also cause or support the male Intra-gender conflicts.

Analysis

From the text, (*Imagine This*) we can infer that men cause the rivalry and strife among women or females and also do act as judges over the women whenever there is a brawl. Mr Ogunwole's behaviour sends his wife away and makes him abandon his daughter to total psychological strangers at Idogun, yet he believes his position as father overrules any other opinion. Iya Soji and Iya Foluso compete for the attention and sole concentration of their husbands against Lola, all caused by Lola's father and not properly handled by Uncle N and J. They believe their husbands (even Cook Woman) are theirs and theirs alone, just as their mothers also feel too, over their sons. Lola experiences some peace when Cook woman notices her indifference, when Segun realizes who her father is and when she views herself as Segun's only girlfriend. Having nothing to share keeps them peaceful. Veronica fights Titi over Gbenga in school, as some girls do over Wale.

Other ladies are initiated into relationship conflicts, such as that of Iya Dayo and Mama against Lola in which Yinka gets initiated. Ronke also comes along imitating her mother as she abuses Lola about her mother's error. Lola is entirely moulded by the initiation into rivalry with Yinka, Iya Rotimi, Mama and the Cook woman. They make her imagine and desire being cruel to them.

The opposition from other women towards the protagonist (Lola) makes her growth and life exposure miserable at intervals. It deters her positive learning process, friend making/keeping process and overall mentality about life. It actually breeds evil thoughts in her especially towards those who have wittingly offended or cheated her without proper apologies. Mama does not support Nana's wedding to her son because the potential bride is a Ghanaian;

so the relationship collapses. Lola's lack of maternal support also makes it difficult for her to relate normally with others.

Types of Conflicts: Conflicts can be **real, artificial, induced, violent** and **mediated**. (Akorede 60-63) A real conflict is one that is based on very concrete and life involving situations. Most of those in the text are real. Few are induced, being caused by some specific situations, such as the fight between Fatima and the other girls in the dormitory, and another between Mama and Mama Abeni. Artificial conflicts are minor misunderstandings that usually occur, such as the quarrel between two girls over Segun, another between Cook woman and Iya Foluso over a big pack of food, and the competition between Lola and Aina. Violent conflicts are such that involve or may involve loss of properties and lives but usually injuries are sustained. There are few examples such as the death of an Uncle's wife probably for the entrance of a second wife to the home, the fight between Lola and Ronke, the clash between Titi and Verionica, Auntie Bose's stand against Iya Soji and so on. Mediated conflicts are those eventually solved by other parties, such as one between Iya Soji, Auntie Bose and Mama Joseph or the one between Jumoke and Remi and so on. Few of these exist in the text.

Gender Conflicts

There are more **Intra-personal gender** conflicts than others, at different situations. It may be assumed that if her mother has taken her away with her, (like Iya Soji does), she may have grown to love and respect others as she should. She will not have looked physically, medically, psychologically and socially deprived at her tender age. She will not have become mischievous, friend-seeking, evil-thinking as she is. Although, she becomes toughened to survive in almost any kind of situation, she loses her abilities to reason and focus for a while.

The **Intra-group gender conflicts** exist mostly within family members such as Uncle N's, Uncle J's, Mr Ogunwole's, the extended family at Idogun, the girls in the dormitory and within Segun's clique. Wives view other females as rivals and so do start unnecessary arguments sometimes. Yolade and Lola get into a clash because she does not view Lola as part of the family. Grandmothers step on their daughters-in-laws' toes just as Mama and Mama Joseph do towards Iya Soji and Iya Foluso, and other women who are not from Idogun, viewing them as evil.

Inter-group gender conflicts exist between families that once raised Lola. The women are the leading voices whenever a meeting holds about Lola. Sometimes a representative of a family is in conflict with another, as Mama and Uncle Jacob's mother was over the plastering of the new house, while hers remains with mud. To her, Uncle Jacob's mother is not part of her family.

Inter Gender Relationships

These are those that exist across genders, and in this text, most of them appear mutual, such as one between Lola and various men, such as Mr Abrahams, Baba Rotimi, Baba Dayo, Uncle N (initially), Uncle J, Alhaji, Aase, and Segun. They all help her especially when they have the power to do otherwise.

Female subjugation and exploitation by the male folk cannot be ruled out such as is observed by Mr Ogunwole on his children; Uncle N's attempt to exploit Lola; Auntie Bunmi's experiences in the hands of men; Wale's behaviours to Lola (even Segun), and the attitude of the Principal, Mr Adesanya, Mr Ade, Mr Ife, Mr Boye, Emman, Seyi and Akin, all towards

Lola. The laws of Egungun festival, the funeral arrangements and Uncle N's discouraging remarks during a football match make this ill-treatment on women very severe.

Although, these men have some negative thoughts and motives, the paramount conflicts that over-rule in the text are intra-gender. A secret with a man (the Pastor) is safe but one with a fellow woman (Remi) causes a lot of problems. Although, the protagonist can be viewed under the lens of psycho analysis, as penis-envy by being overtly attached to her father, brother and boyfriend but from a gender perspective, it can be observed that her mother (another female) leaves her with no choice than to seek her father's and brother's love, and subsequently her boyfriend's since every other female appears hostile to her. She has no playmate in Yinka (a girl) while Rotimi (a boy) seems less antagonistic; so she clamours for Adebola instead. Her uncles' wives and kids are no better so she goes for Segun. Yolade, a girl friend is also not as hospitable at a time, leaving her no alternatives.

Patterns of Interaction

There are specific patterns of interaction that can be found among women such as Reciprocated Friendliness and Hostility; and Unreciprocated Hostility and Friendliness, still within the same gender (Akorede 2011) which also exist in the text, with examples:

Reciprocated Friendliness: This is a pattern which involves the act of friendliness from a woman to another woman, either for a reward or not, but one that eventually gets a positive reaction in return. Examples are the behaviour of Mrs Ogunyemi (Remi's mother), Aina, Iya Dayo, Auntie Bunmi, Alhaja and Ngozi, all towards Lola and the relationship between Mama and the women around her, along with Iya Rotimi at Baba's death.

Reciprocated Hostility: This ensues with a hostile reaction as response to a prior hostile behaviour which is absolutely normal about people. Lola promises herself a limited relationship with Yinka and Iya Rotimi when she eventually arrives Idogun, due to the way they deal with her. Yinka makes her defencelessly evil to the family while Iya Rotimi denies her of her rights. She also spills some raw rice to waste it since Mama will not allow her to cook when hungry. She almost throws mud at Mama when a fight comes up, while building Baba Alaba's house.

Unreciprocated Friendliness: This is, when a friendly attitude gets a hostile reaction such as a friend-seeking behaviour that gets cruel responses from people like Yinka, Yolade, and so on. Cook woman is compulsorily nice to Lola but she dislikes her in turn. Mama Tayo tries to be friends with Iya Rotimi but she meets with hostility. Lola is initially indifferent to Alhaja's caring gestures before opening up. Mrs Banjo tries to reconcile with Lola but Lola stays away at the sound of her voice.

Unreciprocated Hostility: It is unusual especially among women to absorb cruelty and behave nicely to their supposed enemies, but in the text, there exists a few exceptional cases of women who ensure they do not demand their pound of flesh at every confrontation. Iya Rotimi and Mama, for example, are cruel towards Mama Tayo but Mama Tayo in turn tries to be nice; the girls in the dormitory are also loathsome to Fatima but she only strives to appease them; and Yinka is hostile to Lola, who only strives to survive independently.

Thematic Pre-occupation

The text appears to focus on the woman through the feminine abilities that can be rightly channelled but are usually in the opposite. Women are greatly capable of achieving

anything the way they want it especially when handling their marital rivals or supposed 'superiors'. Iya Rotimi becomes hypocritical and deceitful when she pleads with Lola to confess to a crime she is innocent of. Mama becomes overtly concerned about Lola when her father is around; so also the uncles' wives when in the presence of their husbands. When they smile, it is to guarantee that they are happy. A girl like Yinka knows how to wittingly cause trouble and make others defencelessly suffer for it. Lola's mother leaves, so Lola returns to Nigeria, and at the village, Iya Rotimi and Mama make life difficult for her. In Lagos, Cook woman and Iya Soji chase her to the village again. She returns to Lagos and is pursued by Iya Foluso, Yolade and Iya Soji till she gets to Alhaja. Even in her father's house, Cook woman and Ronke remain a threat to her. Virtually every woman she meets makes her feel useless. On the other hand, Ngozi (another female) knows what she needs and wants, the cost of getting them, how to get them and strives hard to achieve her desires. Anything is possible with a determined woman. Their words can achieve tremendous targets.

It also addresses the moral standards of some women which have been severely eroded, exemplified by being unable to apologise, regardless of their errors, when conscious of their older ages and higher statuses. An example is Iya Rotimi's refusal to make an apology to Lola, after punishing and humiliating her for stealing what she does not while some men will wilfully apologise, while Father and Uncle N apologise to Lola after about five weeks of her disappearance. Women need to exercise more love and patience in relating with other women to show that they actually possess good moral standards.

It can also be inferred that life experiences to women in the text are generally unpleasant, so their encounters with other women alike will be equally influenced. For

instance, the injustice and unnecessary pains Lola suffer make her more objective about life issues, especially as regards, the rural African beliefs and values, such that she becomes nonchalant about them, such as the leaf parting style with a witch doctor on a theft case, the ritual conducted on Rotimi for stealing, the sight of the Egungun (when dressing up) without consequences, the song for bed wetting, and so on. When women support one another especially the weak and helpless, it positively motivates their sensitivity to issues that will enable them preserve the feminine integrity and dignity.

It has been further established from research that positive minded intra gender relationships among women make their duties obligations easier, especially when working as a teams. Leaders among various teams have discovered how such supportive efforts help to retain their influence eventually, such that their subordinates develop, the right attitude, the appropriate perception of them and they (leaders) get the desired feedback. There is a need for women to expend their energies and abilities positively for enjoyable and lasting experiences. (Gao, Bo 233-234)

Conclusion

The Intra-gender theory is applied to objectively advise women to positively influence their intra-gender relationships, since they possess the ability to do so. It is amazing that her (Lola's) environmental shift does not deform or retard her growth. She strives and survives successfully with some moral principles that she may have pardonably avoided, having endured without an unbiased parental tutelage. It confirms the assertion that when mothers, wives, daughters, sisters and friends, wish to do the right thing and are allowed to, life experiences of

other females become pleasant and the society reaps the dividends, particularly co-women. This shows how importantly valuable the roles of women are, in the African family especially.

Okpala and Utoh-Ezeajugh also noted that, “In addition, women have the capacity to become architects of their own destinies and decide whether to be included or excluded in the scheme of things”. Quoting other scholars they also said that, “women have been voted globally to use collective action to mount pressure on the authorities in order to liberate themselves from one form of oppression or another” (181-182), in a bid to show their expectations out of every intra gender relationship.

They added that,

there is much in femininity that can change the world. Women are endowed with efficacy, dynamism and creativity. They possess a rare and subtle logic in their resolution of issues in the home, office and society. Unfortunately, they cannot stand because they are not united, they fall because they are divided. They are faced with a double edged sword-internal war and external war (intra gender and inter gender oppressions). Both oppressions are torturous, none is less than the other. (Okpala, and Utoh-Ezeajugh, 181-182).

Okpala, and Utoh-Ezeajugh (16) also agreed that, a concerted effort among women is the only way out of all damaging biases and subjugation, while Gao Bo (170) admonished formal leaders to be more relational in their pattern of leadership. as that could project them and all other parties involved, more successfully, and to choose “feminine communication styles” with the potential of defending all career achievements, over the masculine version. (225) “When women become active participants in their own societies, they acquire a sense of efficacy”, that keeps them relevant in all spheres of life. (Caprioli 174)

According to other scholars, as a way out of sociocultural subjugation, African Feminism requires a united bond of fellow women. (Ugwanyi 17,19) “Women should be

reoriented to allow sisterly bond exist among them and not allow themselves to be used by the adherent of patriarchy to perpetuate intra-gender conflicts”. (Oyewole 5) Karik-Namiji, also added that, the emancipation and empowerment of the African woman are dependent upon all theoretical facilities being put in place to address all conflicts that stiffen their intra gender relations, and called for, “a healthy and supportive cycle of women who will stick together at all times...”, not allowing, “cultural and environmental factors break their bond of sisterhood thereby rendering them ineffective”. (23)

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